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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 54th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HADID (Algeria)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 130: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST: (continued)

(a) UNITED NATIONS DISENGAGEMENT OBSERVER FORCE (continued) (A/48/700 and A/48/905)

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AGENDA ITEM 160: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING FORCE IN CYPRUS (continued) (A/48/846 and Corr.1 and A/48/907)

1. Mr. TAKASU (Controller), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on the financing of the missions referred to in the agenda items which the Fifth Committee was currently considering, said that document A/48/906 contained the results of the review carried out by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions of the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report on the financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) (A/48/848). Many of the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee were very reasonable and the Secretary-General intended to implement them as fully as possible. Some of the recommendations, however, might prove difficult to implement.

2. For example, in paragraph 14 of its report (A/48/906), the Advisory Committee expressed its belief that staff who were voluntarily away from Headquarters and not on official duty should not receive mission subsistence allowance at the rate of $110 instead of $40 or $45 per person per day. It would be useful, however, to recall the rationale which the Secretariat used to justify daily mission subsistence allowance at the rate of $110 per person. Paragraph 13 of the above-mentioned report explained that that amount was payable as mission subsistence allowance only to staff who were away from their base duty stations but within the Mission area, unless such staff at a location within the Mission area where they were provided with accommodation and food, in which case the mission subsistence allowance was $40 to $45 per person, depending on the location. That rationale was reasonable and the amounts in question were reasonable and comparable to those which staff serving in other mission areas received. Consequently, it would be very difficult to implement that specific recommendation of the Advisory Committee. He hoped that the rationale which had been used thus far would continue to be applied.

3. In addition, in paragraph 28 of the same report, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should be given authority to use the unencumbered balance of the initial appropriation for the maintenance of MINURSO at the level of $9 million gross for the three-month period from 1 January to 31 March 1994 and $3 million gross per month each month thereafter pending the receipt of the Secretary-General's report on revised cost estimates. Since the

amount corresponding to the first of those subsequent months must be made available at an early date, namely, 1 April 1994, that recommendation would be difficult to implement and its implementation would give rise to serious problems. In that regard, he noted that the Security Council was dealing not only with the question of the mandate of MINURSO, but also with the urgent needs of that Mission for the period beginning 1 April. The Secretary-General had submitted for the Council's consideration several options in that regard, and it was his understanding that the Council would adopt a decision at an early date.

4. As for the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), contained in document A/48/700, the Advisory Committee had carefully considered that report and had presented the results of its review in document A/48/905, in which it had made important recommendations. In paragraph 6 of its report, the Advisory Committee saw no need to enter the surplus balance of $5,109,700 into the suspense account, as the Secretary-General had proposed. As the Committee would recall, in the case of UNDOF the General Assembly had in the past followed the procedure of transferring the surplus balance to the suspense account in order to facilitate operations, instead of crediting those amounts to Member States. In the above-mentioned paragraph of its report, the Advisory Committee stated two arguments in support of its opinion: the status of assessed contributions to UNDOF and the fact that full reimbursement had been made on a current basis to troop-contributing States. The Secretary-General had done everything possible to speed up the rate at which reimbursements were made to Member States, and, in the case of UNDOF, a good record of reimbursements had been maintained. That good record, however, should not be used as grounds for refusing to approve measures aimed at strengthening the financial base of the operations. That was a matter for the Fifth Committee to consider with a view to finding the most reasonable solution.

5. In paragraph 21 of its report on UNDOF, the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the Secretary-General's estimate of $32,160,000 and that one half of that amount should be appropriated and assessed in respect of the period from 1 December 1993 to 31 May 1994, in other words, the current period. After that period, in other words after 1 June 1994, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should be given commitment authorization not exceeding $2,680,000 gross per month and that those amounts should be assessed on Member States. He welcomed that recommendation; that was the practice which had been followed on previous occasions by the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee. It would be extremely useful for the Secretariat to rationalize its budget procedures. He hoped that Member States and the Fifth Committee would keep the matter under review.

6. With regard to the financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the Secretary-General had submitted his report in document A/48/841, and the results of the Advisory Committee's consideration of that report were also contained in document A/48/905. The comments which he had just made on the Advisory Committee's recommendations in the case of UNDOF also applied to the recommendations which that Committee made on UNIFIL in paragraphs 39 and 40 of document A/48/905. The Secretary-General hoped that Member States would

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continue jointly examining ways of rationalizing the procedures for the financing of peace-keeping operations.

7. Lastly, the Secretary-General's report on the financing of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) appeared in document A/48/846. The results of the review of that report by the Advisory Committee were contained in document A/48/907. He had only one comment to make with regard to the report of the Advisory Committee on UNFICYP, concerning the financing of operations after the conclusion of the current period: in paragraph 19, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should be authorized to commit a sum not exceeding $3.8 million per month for the period from 16 June 1994 to 15 December 1994, or, in other words, for the period following the current period, and that those amounts should be assessed on Member States. By way of explanation, the Advisory Committee invoked the relatively stable nature of UNFICYP. He welcomed that recommendation, and hoped that the financing of UNFICYP would continue to be streamlined and that Member States and the Secretariat would continue to work together to that end, in the interests of all parties concerned.

8. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) said that, taking into account the considerable surplus in the budgets of UNDOF and UNIFIL, his Government believed that those sums should be credited to Member States. That view related not only to the amounts mentioned in the reports of the Secretary-General and of the Advisory Committee (namely, approximately $5.1 million in the case of UNDOF and some $5.7 million in the case of UNIFIL), but also to the amounts that had accumulated since the thirty-third session of the General Assembly, when the Assembly had decided to retain sums of that nature in the suspense account. In the view of his delegation, leaving those sums in the suspense account was a means of rewarding Member States that were in arrears in their contributions or paid them very late, and was in a sense a way of penalizing Member States that paid their contributions on time.

9. With regard to those two operations, UNDOF and UNIFIL, his delegation had two specific questions. First, it would like the Secretariat to provide more information on the "30-30-20-20" depreciation scale referred to in paragraph 17 of document A/48/905, concerning reimbursement for contingent-owned equipment. Moreover, it would welcome information from the Secretariat on the application of that depreciation scale with regard to UNDOF. Its understanding was that a different system was used for the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

10. Secondly, with regard to UNIFIL, there were apparently a considerable number of international staff in the General Service category and in the Field Service serving with that operation, which was quite stable. His delegation wondered whether those staff might be replaced by locally recruited staff.

11. Lastly, the Netherlands shared the concerns expressed by other delegations that the process of adopting decisions on resolutions involving peace-keeping operations which the Fifth Committee considered periodically, in particular those concerning UNDOF, UNIFIL and UNFICYP, which were basically quite stable operations that presented relatively few surprises with regard to budget and

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financing, should perhaps be accelerated. It proposed that in each case a draft resolution submitted by one delegation should be distributed, thus obviating the need to hold lengthy informal consultations, since in the case of those operations the Advisory Committee's recommendations on commitment authorizations and assessed contributions could simply be accepted.

12. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that the implementation of the settlement plan for Western Sahara had entered a decisive phase with the proposals submitted to the Security Council by the Secretary-General in document S/1994/283. In that report the Secretary-General, after reviewing the efforts made by himself and his Special Representative for Western Sahara to obtain the cooperation of the other party, which continued to refuse to accept the compromise proposal concerning the interpretation and application of the identification criteria, had presented three options for pursuing the work of preparing the referendum. Option A proposed that the settlement plan should be carried out even without the cooperation of the other party. Option B proposed that the work of identification and registration should continue on the basis of the compromise proposal, while efforts to obtain the cooperation of the other party continued. Option C proposed a reduction in the United Nations presence, which, in view of the lack of cooperation of the other party, would be limited to monitoring the cease-fire.

13. In view of the fact that the United Nations must not lose interest in a matter in which it had invested so much effort and money, only two valid options existed, options A and B. His delegation favoured proceeding on the basis of option A, since in its view Morocco, which had already made numerous concessions in the interests of accelerating the implementation of the settlement plan, should not be made to suffer because of the disinclination of the other party. Morocco would much regret the adoption of option B, since, aside from requiring further resources, it would indicate that neither the resolutions adopted by the Security Council on the question of Western Sahara nor the settlement plan had been heeded.

14. Those preliminary comments demonstrated that the Secretary-General's proposals on the financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) were not appropriate and should be re-examined in view of the foreseeable evolution of the situation. Certain proposals were unacceptable, such as the use of the Special Representative "on an as-required basis" at a time when an increase in the activities of MINURSO was envisaged. The proposal to make use of the services of the Special Representative in that manner, for the purpose of eliminating his post, had been made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), contrary to its normal practice, without a prior evaluation of the volume of work to be carried out by the Special Representative. The decision to eliminate the post of Special Representative ran counter to the provisions of the settlement plan and of the pertinent Security Council resolutions; Morocco therefore requested that that post should be re-established and the necessary resources should be allocated to pay for it for a period of not merely six months, but one year. It also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the use, by the

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United Nations, of the term, "on an as-required basis" for the services of high-ranking officials, including those of ACABQ.

15. The preliminary budgetary estimates for the financing of MINURSO had envisaged a post of Assistant Secretary-General for the Deputy Special Representative. Considering that the Secretary-General had recently named the chairman of the Identification Commission as Deputy Special Representative, Morocco proposed that the post of Assistant Secretary-General should be reinstated in the budgetary estimates for MINURSO.

16. Morocco requested the Secretariat to review the funding of MINURSO in view of the proposals currently before the Security Council with regard to the activities of the Mission, and to explain its conception of the future activities of the Special Representative. It also requested a clarification of the current functioning of MINURSO without the services of the Special Representative.

17. Mr. BOIN (France) agreed with the Netherlands representative that the surpluses in the accounts of peace-keeping operations should be credited to the countries that paid assessed contributions for the financing of such operations, making sure that such surpluses were credited to those countries that had actually paid their assessed contributions. He had already made proposals to that end at informal meetings concerning some peace-keeping operations. He hoped that those proposals would be considered carefully by the Secretariat and by delegations.

18. His country contributed substantial numbers of troops to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and was currently owed considerable sums that the Force was not in a position to reimburse due to its precarious financial situation. France had had to incur expenses amounting to several millions of dollars in respect of sickness, disability and death compensation for members of its contingent. As such expenditure involved not only delicate financial issues but also delicate political issues, his delegation wished to know how the appropriations approved for the financing of that peace-keeping operation had been calculated - had they been calculated net of debts owed to troop-contributing countries or according to another formula? Reimbursements must be made not only to the countries that had paid their assessed contributions but also, in particular, to troop-contributing countries.

19. The financing of stable peace-keeping operations such as UNIFIL, UNFICYP and UNDOF should be carried out on an annual basis. The decision to finance those forces on an annual basis could be taken right away, initially, for the current phase, on the basis of an authorization to enter into commitments for expenditures that would extend such financing until the end of March 1995. Later, that financing could be effected for normal yearly periods. Naturally, the adoption of such measures should not be construed as granting a permanent mandate to those peace-keeping operations; their extension should continue to be considered periodically.

20. Mr. KELLY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and his own country, and referring to the financing of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), said that that group of UNFICYP troop-contributing countries reaffirmed its support for the changes in the financing of the Force approved by the Secretary-General in September 1993. Provision had been made in those changes for the partial funding of UNFICYP from assessed contributions, which represented considerable progress towards acceptance of the principle of collective responsibility in the financing of peace-keeping operations.

21. Expenditures in connection with peace-keeping operations must be reimbursed quickly and in full since they otherwise constituted an excessive financial burden for troop-contributing countries, especially developing countries. In the case of UNFICYP, expenditures of those countries for the period prior to the new financial arrangements had been reimbursed only up to the end of 1981. From then until 16 June 1993, some $200 million in arrears had been accumulated in respect of reimbursement to troop-contributing countries. That amount represented legitimate peace-keeping expenditure by those countries which the United Nations must reimburse. It must be borne in mind that such expenditures constituted only a small part of the total expenditures; that those countries had incurred in order to be able to provide troops to UNFICYP over the previous 30 years, since the original arrangements pertaining to the establishment of the Force had provided for only a partial reimbursement of such expenditure.

22. The countries that contributed troops to UNFICYP welcomed the measures adopted by the Secretariat in order to solve that problem through the request for voluntary contributions to the special account for the period prior to 16 June 1993. They also welcomed the voluntary contributions made in response to the Secretary-General's appeal of 12 November 1993 and wished to express their gratitude to all Member States and observer States for their contributions towards the reimbursement of the sums owed to troop-contributing countries in respect of the period prior to 16 June 1993.

23. Additional measures needed to be adopted, based on the principle that peace-keeping expenditures must be financed by all Member States. Consequently, he reiterated the proposal made previously during the debate on that issue to the effect that the Secretary-General should be requested to use, at the end of each mandate, starting with the period that ended on 15 December 1993, the unencumbered balances, miscellaneous income and interest income on the UNFICYP special account to reimburse the expenditures incurred by troop-contributing countries prior to 16 June 1993.

24. Mr. KUZNETSOV (Russian Federation), referring to the documents submitted by the Secretariat concerning the financing of peace-keeping operations, said that it was unacceptable that a number of those documents had been only partly translated into Russian. Such incidents should not be allowed to recur especially with respect to highly important documents such as those on the financing of peace-keeping operations.

25. Mrs. CAIRNS (United Kingdom) expressed agreement with the statement of the representative of Ireland speaking on behalf of other countries that had contributed troops to UNFICYP until 16 June 1993. The United Kingdom, however, had not requested the reimbursement of its expenditures for that period.

26. Mr. RAMOS (Spain) agreed with the representative of the Russian Federation that it was unacceptable for delegations not to be able to have documents fully translated into the official languages of the Organization. A few days previously, his delegation had demanded that right and was vigorously doing so again. He hoped that an end would be put to that practice.

27. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) expressed his gratitude for the contributions of Member States to the missions in the form of both troops and cash, such as the very generous contribution of the Governments of Greece and Cyprus to UNFICYP.

28. Concerning reimbursements to troop-contributing States, the UNFICYP situation was serious, since until recently that operation had been financed from voluntary contributions, which had been insufficient to cover expenditures, there was considerable delay in reimbursements. The Secretariat, which was trying to the extent possible to effect such reimbursements using the resources available under the old UNFICYP system, was currently working on reimbursement for 1992. Even so, the accumulated deficit for the operation during that period amounted to $200 million which meant that many troop-contributing countries were waiting for their reimbursements, thus creating an extremely serious situation. Should the General Assembly agree, the suggestion made by the representative of Ireland would allow the Secretariat to make progress towards a solution of the reimbursement issue.

29. Concerning the translation of documents including annexes, the Secretariat would see to it that documents were translated into all the official languages. However, when the deadlines were very short, a reasonable amount of time was required not only for the preparation of the cost estimates, but also for their translation into the official languages and their issuance.

30. With regard to the establishment of surplus accounts, in the case of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), the Secretariat had benefited in previous years from the General Assembly decision to suspend the application of the Financial Rules on transferring the surplus to the Special Account in order for peace-keeping operations to continue until such time as contributions were received from Member States. In general, that "reserve" had also been of enormous help in easing the cash-flow difficulties of peace-keeping operations. Although some operations were in a better state than others, the overall situation was serious. In the case of UNDOF, in particular, a question had been raised concerning the application of a certain reimbursement formula in respect of contingent-owned equipment. Traditionally, in established operations such as UNDOF, UNIFIL and the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), the evaluation of equipment provided by troop-contributing countries was relatively simple and the formula established for reimbursement was "30-30-20-20". Thus, budgetary estimates of costs were based on that formula and reimbursement was based on those estimates. In certain recent operations, particularly large-scale operations, the evaluation of contingent-owned

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equipment was more complicated. For example, the UNPROFOR budget included 10 per cent of the estimated value of contingent-owned equipment. That did not mean that there had been a change in Secretariat policy and that 10 per cent was now paid on all operations; the formula for reimbursement remained the same. The question of the formula for reimbursing contingent-owned equipment was one on which the Secretary-General was to submit a report.

31. Concerning the more widespread use of local personnel, the Secretariat was aware of that vital question, which would have great advantages not only in terms of costs but also of the operations themselves, and he was considering it carefully.

32. With regard to the question of how to treat revised cost estimates for MINURSO in the light of the imminent decision by the Security Council, the budget document which had been submitted by the Secretary-General and considered by the Advisory Committee was based on the criteria in force and no changes were envisaged in the current level of maintenance. As for the various operational options, whatever decision the Security Council took would have additional financial implications over and above what the Advisory Committee had recommended, namely, $3 million per month. In the light of the Security Council decision, the Secretary-General intended to begin preparing a detailed statement of estimated costs, on the basis of which the General Assembly could determine additional requirements, but the granting of commitment authority would not prevent the Secretariat from continuing the operation at the same level of maintenance.

33. The question of the arrangements regarding the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General had been closely considered by the Advisory Committee in the autumn of 1993. Basically, the Committee had recommended that the Secretariat should review those arrangements in view of the uneven volume of activity and had invited the Secretary-General to consider the viability of establishing posts on an as and when employed basis. The Secretary-General, who believed that the political process had reached its current phase as a result of the constant efforts of the Special Representative, had carefully considered the question and decided that, effective 1 December 1993, the Special Representative would be paid on a "when actually employed" basis. The Special Representative had been in the Mission area a number of times in January and February. The budget submitted had been formulated on that basis and the Secretary-General intended to continue to review the arrangement in order to determine the best possible combination of the functions of the Special Representative and the Deputy Special Representative, since activities outside the Mission area were extremely important and there must always be a person in charge when the Special Representative was absent from the area, in accordance with the settlement plan. The Secretariat was keeping the question under constant review and would revert to it, if necessary. If there was a better formula, a proposal would be submitted in due course.

34. Many delegations had said that they favoured a more flexible budgetary process in respect of peace-keeping operations; the Secretariat welcomed that

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positive attitude, which would be to everyone's advantage. There was probably a way to improve the current procedure without compromising the required budgetary transparency.

35. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that, although the Controller had indicated that the Secretariat would ensure the continuation of MINURSO at the same level of activity, the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/1994/283 and Add.1) made it abundantly clear that, whatever option was approved, resources for the Mission would have to be increased. Option C should be ruled out, since the United Nations was determined that efforts to resolve the problem in Western Sahara should continue. Both the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee knew that the remaining options A and B, involved an increase in the resources required. Although specific activities were already planned under those options, the Secretariat was trying to ignore them and to get the Fifth Committee to take a decision prior to a decision by the Security Council in that regard. In his explanation on the question of the Special Representative, the Controller had not responded to his delegation's observation that there was a legal issue involved: the Advisory Committee was interfering in political affairs by making proposals which might impede the implementation of the settlement plan, in which so much work had been invested. Moreover, the proposals were contrary to the Security Council resolutions appointing the Special Representative and approving the settlement plan and to the first resolution on financing, in which the establishment of the post of Special Representative had been approved as a full-time post - not only on a "when actually employed" basis - and the post of Deputy Special Representative had been established at the assistant secretary-general level. He wished to know why the Secretariat had omitted any reference to that post in the report and why MINURSO was to remain under a staff member at the D-2 level.

36. For all those reasons, his delegation did not accept either the recommendations of the Secretary-General or those of the Advisory Committee, but would like to see new proposals submitted which would take into account the foreseeable factors and which were already under discussion, before the question was referred to informal consultations.

37. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) said that, for the time being, his delegation would refrain from stating its position on the recent report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on MINURSO (S/1994/283 and Add.1). As for the options set out in that report, his delegation was of the view that the Fifth Committee was not the most appropriate forum for a debate on the question. Naturally, it believed that MINURSO must be maintained. His delegation would never oppose any measures aimed at administrative rationalization and savings which were approved by the Secretary-General and supported by the Advisory Commission; moreover, it believed that such measures deserved the support of the Fifth Committee. He asked what the consequences would be for MINURSO if the informal consultations were delayed.

38. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that, while it was true that the Fifth Committee was not a political organ, it was a Committee of the General Assembly, and in that sense it was. Morocco had almost always supported the recommendations of

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the Advisory Committee, but, in the case in question, the Advisory Committee had made proposals of a political nature which might be prejudicial to an operation and, in particular, to the work of the Special Representative. He also hoped that, in future, the General Assembly would be kept informed of the correspondence exchanged between the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat; it was regrettable that the General Assembly had no knowledge of such important proposals when the daily newspaper Al-Watan had information on the whole issue and had published commentaries on it several months earlier at the time when it had been under consideration by the Advisory Committee. Such information leaks from what was supposed to be a technical body were unfortunate.

39. Mr. BOIN (France) regretted the absence of any mention of the important question of the amounts paid by his country by way of compensation for sickness, disability or death in respect of members of the French contingents to which his delegation had referred in connection with UNIFIL and, in general, with all the operations to which France had long been contributing significant contingents. On 15 February, the Permanent Representative of France had addressed a letter on that subject to the Secretary-General. France would welcome a reply to that letter from the Secretariat during a formal meeting.

40. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that when Morocco had approved the budget for MINURSO it had not been aware that the Mission's mandate would be for a fixed period of time. In its view, the duration of the Mission should be determined only by the time that was required for the implementation of the approved settlement plan, in accordance with the timetable set out therein; at no time had a specific time-frame been established for the completion of that task. Given the fact that it was the only operation for which financial resources were still available, he failed to understand why difficulties were being raised in that regard. The decision which the Security Council was to take with respect to the Mission had nothing to do with its mandate, but rather with the relevant measures to be adopted in the future. In his view, from a legal standpoint, there was no need to take a further decision to authorize the Secretary-General to use the resources available, although, given the changes that had been introduced, Morocco would not object to the adoption of a new provision which would take those changes into account. His delegation reserved the right to revert to the subject if necessary, following the Controller's reply to the questions raised.

41. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that he could assure the representative of Morocco that there was close coordination between the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (A/48/848) and the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council (S/1994/283 and Add.1), since his office had dealt with the financial aspects of both documents. As indicated in paragraph 16 of document A/48/848, the Secretary-General had decided to maintain the military and civilian strength which MINURSO had at the time the decision was adopted until he submitted his next report to the Security Council. In document S/1994/283/Add.1, the Secretary-General had submitted cost estimates for the proposed options A, B and C. The cost of option A - under which the United Nations should proceed to hold the referendum at the end of the year - would be $78.5 million, a sum which, when added to the initial estimates, would

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make a total of $108 million. The cost of option B, under which the Identification Commission would continue its work for a period of three months beginning on 1 April and the Security Council would take a decision in the light of the progress made during that period, would be $4.3 million, an amount which, when added to the estimates already provided, would make a total of $14.2 million.

42. Option A would require a complete revision of the estimates of expenditure, which would in fact mean the preparation of a new budget. Option B would involve an increase in requirements of approximately 30 per cent, which would mean that new commitment authority would have to be sought. The Fifth Committee would have to review the situation very carefully in the event that the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of MINURSO.

43. After careful review, the Secretary-General had accepted the new approach to the utilization of the Special Representative's services recommended by the Advisory Committee, provided that that approach would not impede the fulfilment of the operation's mandate. If at any time the Secretariat, which was keeping the situation under constant review, considered that the situation had changed, it would inform the Advisory Committee or the General Assembly accordingly. There were therefore no misunderstandings with regard to the respective responsibilities of the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee.

44. With regard to the concern expressed by the representative of France, he regretted the number of cases of disability and death recorded among the UNIFIL contingents. The United Nations was currently reimbursing an amount equivalent to the compensation which had been paid by the Member State in question to the families of the victims, in accordance with the national legislation in force. The United Nations was effecting the reimbursements as soon as possible following the receipt of a certified statement of the exact amount of the compensation.

45. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) said that the Secretariat had not given a satisfactory reply to the question concerning the elimination of the post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara; that raised a serious legal problem, since the post had been envisaged in the settlement plan and in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. The Secretariat had eliminated the post at the request of the Advisory Committee, despite the fact that, on 1 November 1993, the Department of Political Affairs had stated in internal correspondence addressed to the Controller that the Secretary-General had confirmed the need for the continued services of his Special Representative in order to be able to implement the settlement plan. He wished to place on record that Morocco was not prepared to accept the recommendations of the Advisory Committee or of the Secretary-General if those recommendations were not duly modified.

46. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Vice-Chairman of the Committee should coordinate informal consultations on those peace-keeping operations to which reference had been made during the meeting.

47. It was so decided.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

48. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to the proposed programme of work of the Fifth Committee for the resumed forty-eighth session, which appeared in document A/C.5/48/L.37/Rev.2.

49. Mr. DAMICO (Brazil) said that the programme of work indicated that the meetings of the open-ended Working Group on the placement of Member States into the groups for the apportionment of peace-keeping expenses would be announced at a later date; however, in the Journal of Wednesday, 23 March 1994 (No. 1994/56 (Part I)), it was announced that those meetings would be held on 24 and 25 March 1994. It was his delegation's understanding that the General Assembly had still not taken a decision on the meetings of that Working Group; he would therefore welcome clarification from the Secretariat.

50. His delegation also shared the Chairman's opinion that maximum use should be made of the valuable time available, in terms of conference services, and it did not consider it wise to hold meetings of the Working Group at a time when the review by the Committee of other aspects of peace-keeping operations was still pending.

51. Mrs. PEÑA (Mexico) supported the views just expressed by the representative of Brazil. It was her delegation's understanding that the meetings of the Working Group would be held at the end of April 1994. Furthermore, small delegations, like that of Mexico, had great difficulty in keeping up with the progress of the work of the various bodies when the meetings and sessions of two or more bodies were held simultaneously.

52. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands), Mr. MAZEMO (Zimbabwe), Mrs. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) and Mr. BOIN (France) said that they shared the concern expressed by the representatives of Brazil and Mexico about the Committee's programme of work and the meetings of the Working Group.

53. The CHAIRMAN said that, in light of the comments made, the Bureau of the Fifth Committee would propose new dates for the meetings of the Working Group on the placement of Member States into the groups for the apportionment of peace-keeping expenses. He added that the new dates would be after the Committee had concluded its review of the 17 peace-keeping operations.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.